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ABSTRACT

Academic advisors want to use all available data in helping a student select a major field of study. Recent research suggests that the identification of a student's basic philosophic viewpoint is one such piece of data that is not presently used. This study examined a random sample of college students (N=347) in order to determine the relationship of their philosophic viewpoint to their choice of college major. Variables examined included student's scores on a philosophic preference questionnaire, student's gender, whether or not the student was a transfer student, and whether or not the student was a candidate for teacher certification. Results indicated that the philosophic viewpoints of idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism were both real and measurable. Fine arts majors were low on pragmatism and high on idealism. Education majors tended to be low on realism. Natural science majors were less idealistic than fine arts majors, applied science majors, and education majors. Natural science majors were also significantly less existentialistic than health/physical education/recreation (HPER) majors, education majors, and business majors. Humanities majors were less realistic than physical education majors and less pragmatic than HPER majors, business majors, and social science majors. Females scored higher on idealism while males were more inclined toward realism. Males were also more pragmatic. Transfer students were teacher certification native students. Whether students were teacher certification candidates was not significantly related to their philosophical orientation. (ABL)

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DO PRAGMATISTS CHOOSE BUSINESS WHILE IDEALISTS CHOOSE EDUCATION?
(OR, USING PHILOSOPHY AS A GUIDE IN ACADEMIC ADVISING)

by

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A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Academic
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Do Pragmatists Choose Business While Idealists Choose Education?
(or, Using Philosophy as a Guide in Academic Advising)

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We believe that the academic adviser wants to use all available data in helping a student select a major field of study. Our recent research suggests that identification of a student's basic philosophic viewpoint is one such piece of data that is not presently used. This may be because advisors do not know how to ascertain that viewpoint or because they do not feel that it is relevant to the student's choice of major.

We conducted research at Eastern Illinois University on a random sample of 347 students, representing all six colleges in the University. It showed that the student's philosophic viewpoint was indeed significantly related to his/her choice of major.*

We examined the following variables in our research: student's scores on a philosophic preference questionnaire, student's gender, whether or not the student was a transfer student, and whether or not the student was a candidate for teacher certification.

The following is a synopsis of our results. We found that there were distinguishable philosophies among the students. In other words, separate philosophical viewpoints (Idealism, Realism, Pragmatism, and Existentialism) are both real and measurable. More importantly, they are significantly related to different academic fields of study.

Using SPSSX discriminant analysis, we found that natural science majors scored relatively low on Existentialism and high on Pragmatism, majors in the humanities were low in both Idealism and Pragmatism and high in Existentialism. Fine arts majors were low on Pragmatism and high on Idealism. Finally, education majors tended to score low on Realism.

Duncan multiple analysis indicated that natural science majors were significantly less Idealistic than fine arts majors, applied science majors, and education majors; natural science majors were also significantly less Existentialistic than health/physical education/recreation (HPER) majors, education majors, and business majors; humanities majors were significantly less Realistic than physical education majors; humanities majors were also significantly less Pragmatic than HPER majors, business majors, and social science majors; social science majors were significantly less Existentialistic than HPER majors.

Using SPSSX univariate analysis, we also found that females scored higher on Idealism and that males were more inclined toward Realism. Males were also more Pragmatic. The least gender difference occurred with Existentialism.

The only significant difference in philosophical orientation when comparing those students who had taken all their coursework at the University with those students who had transferred was that students who had transferred were found to be more Idealistic than native students. Whether students were teacher certification candidates or not was not significantly related to their philosophical orientation.

* The student's philosophic viewpoint was categorized according to the following four philosophies which are briefly summarized below:

- Idealism: The Idealist believes that reality is basically spirit or idea. Knowledge is gained through the mind. Value is measured by conformity to ideals.

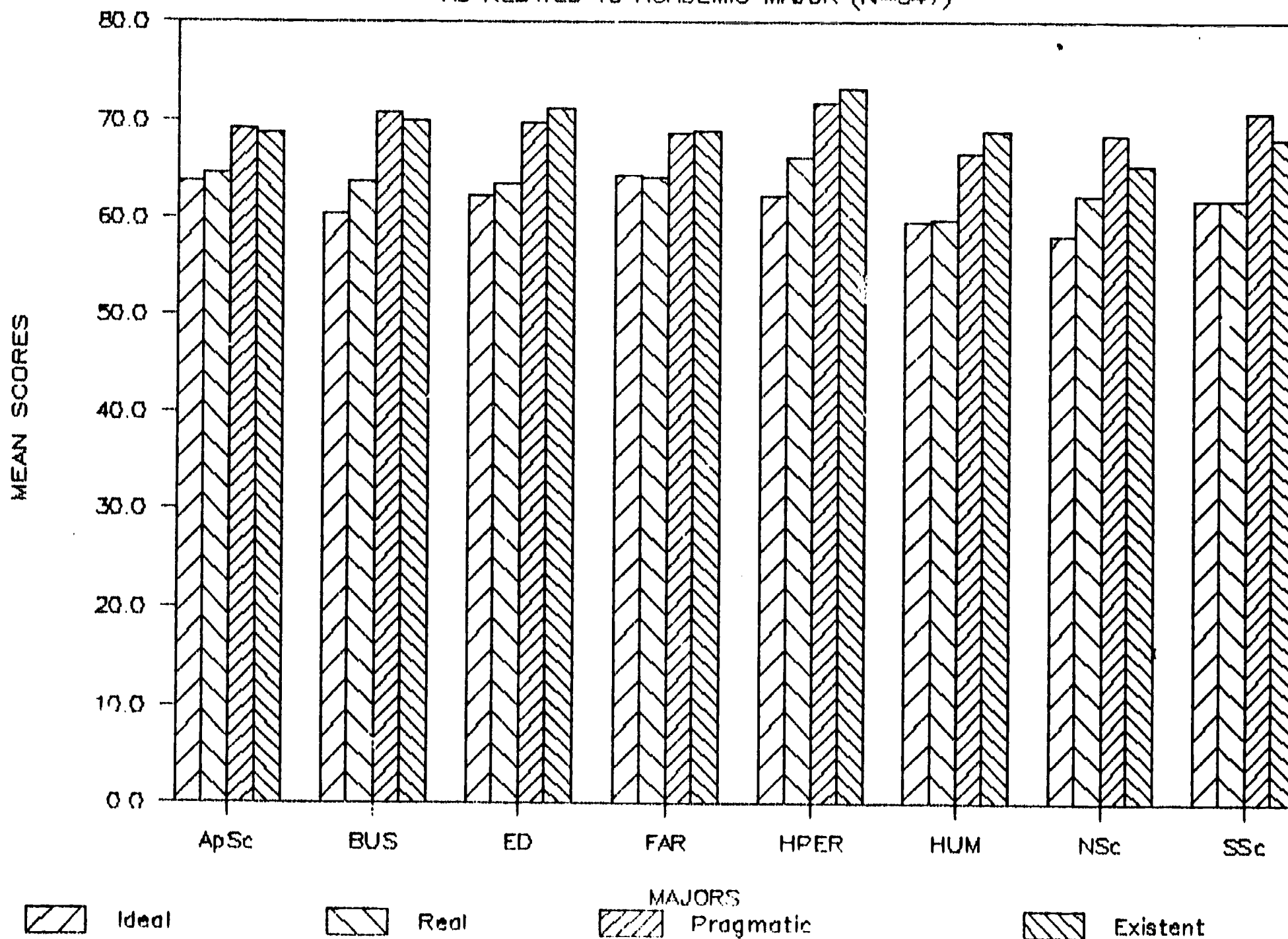
- Realism: The Realist believes that reality is basically matter or the physical. Knowledge is gained through the senses. Value is measured by conformity to nature.

- Pragmatism: The Pragmatist believes that reality is basically process or experience. Knowledge is gained through trial and error. Value is measured by norms adopted by the majority.

- Existentialism: The Existentialist believes that reality is self-defined. Knowledge is gained through making personal decisions about what is true. Value is measured by what any individual responsibly chooses as good.

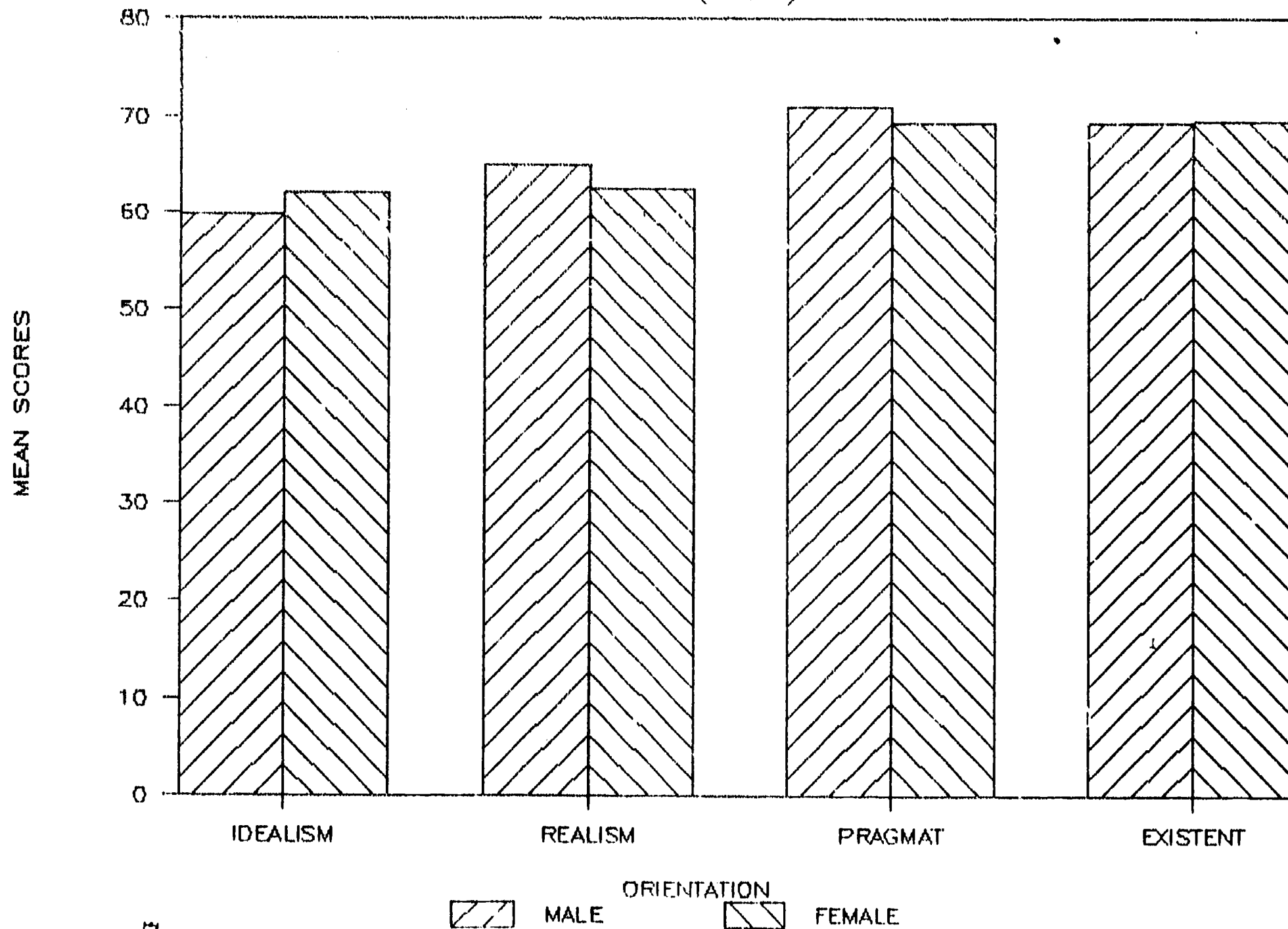
STUDENTS' PHILOSOPHIC ORIENTATION

AS RELATED TO ACADEMIC MAJOR (N=347)



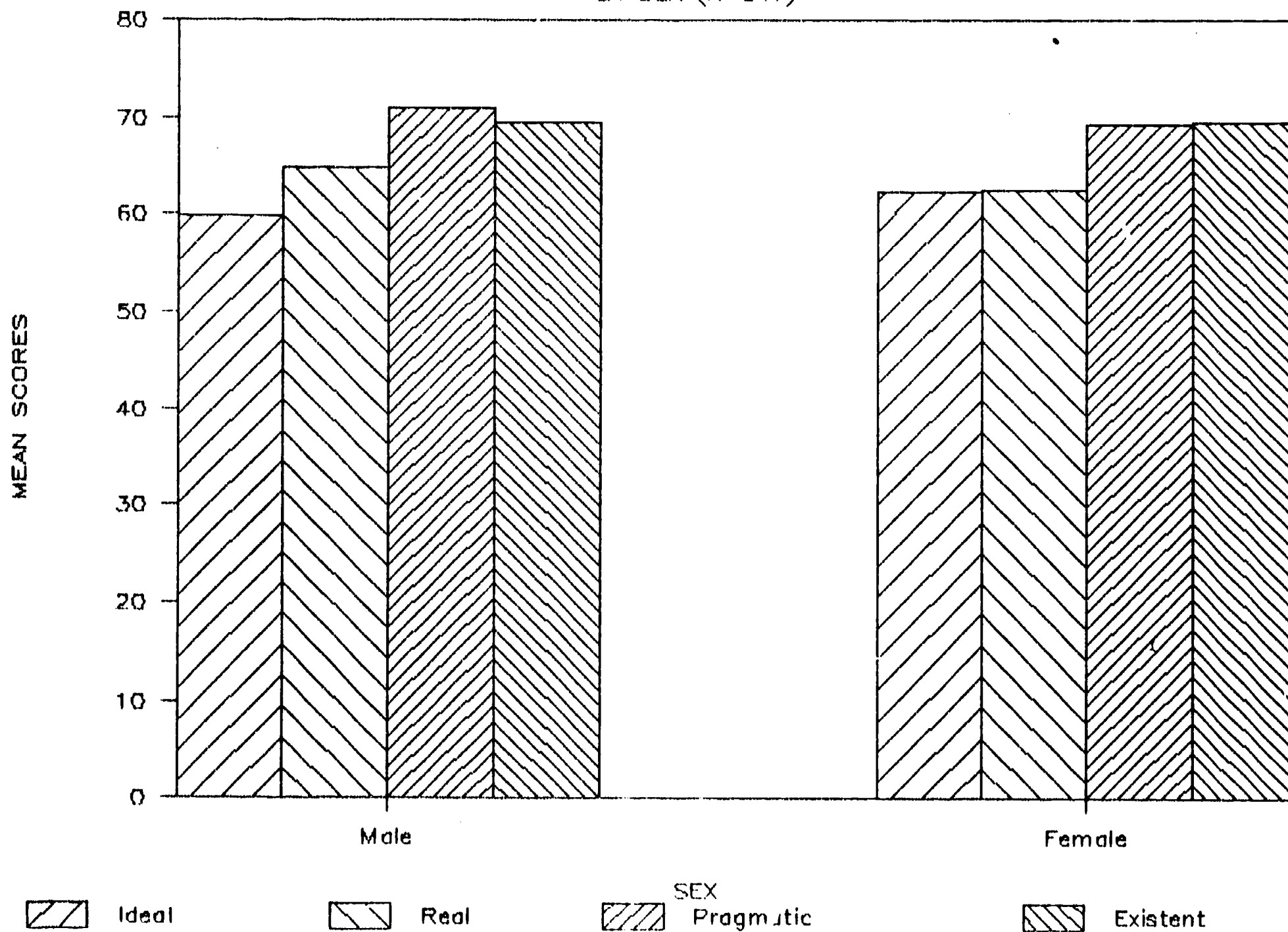
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BY SEX (N=347)



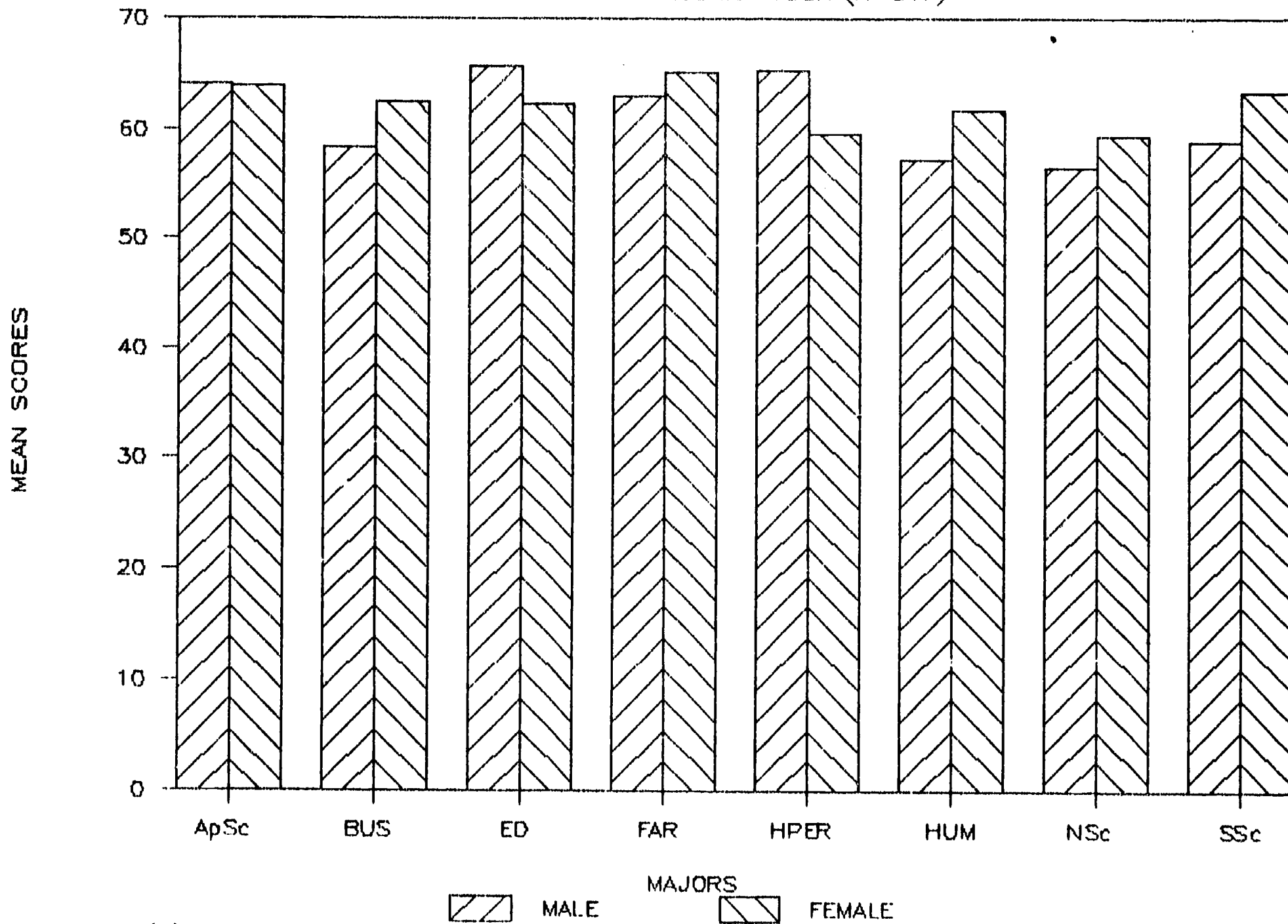
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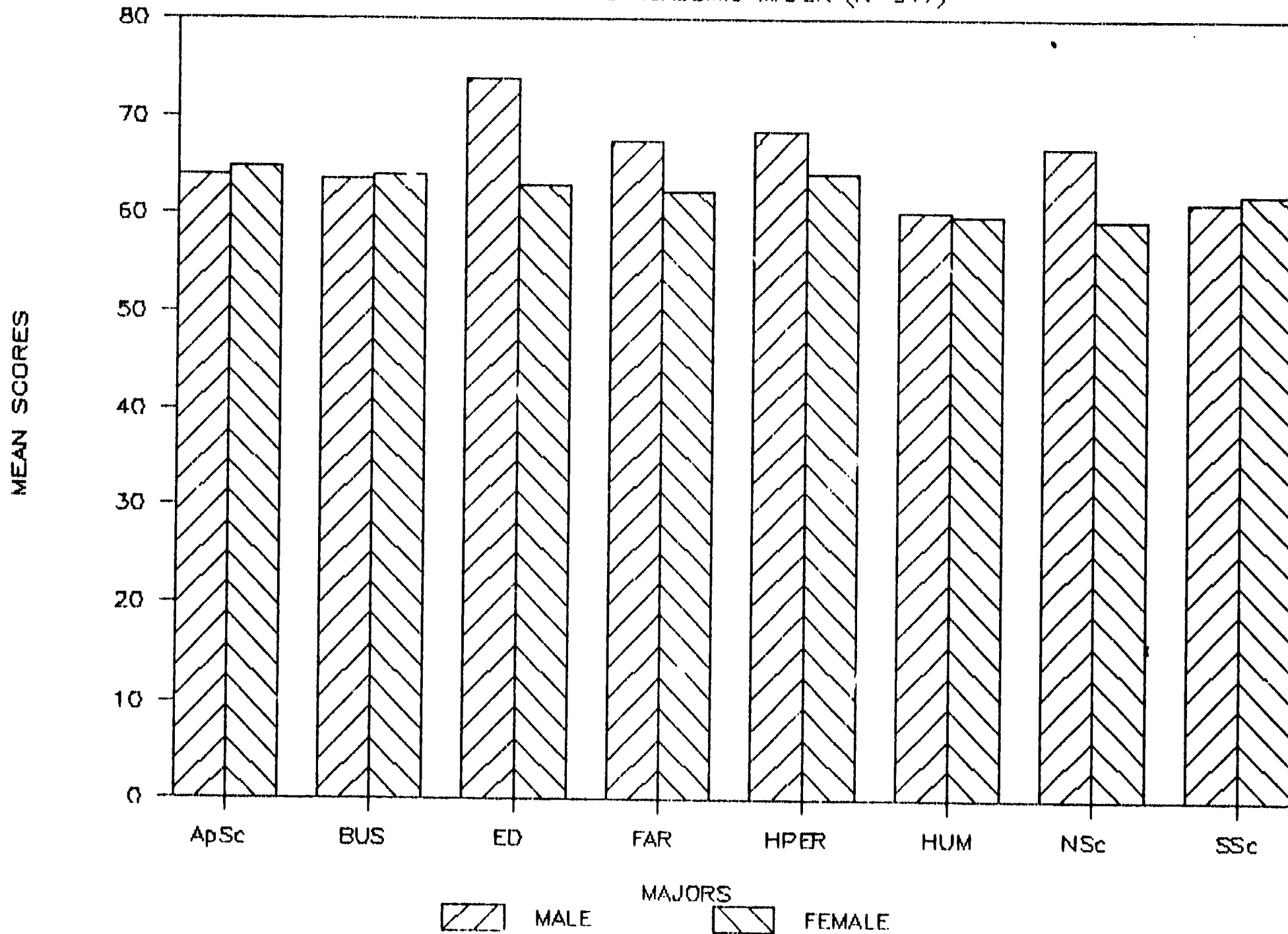
IDEALISM

AS RELATED TO ACADEMIC MAJOR (N=347)



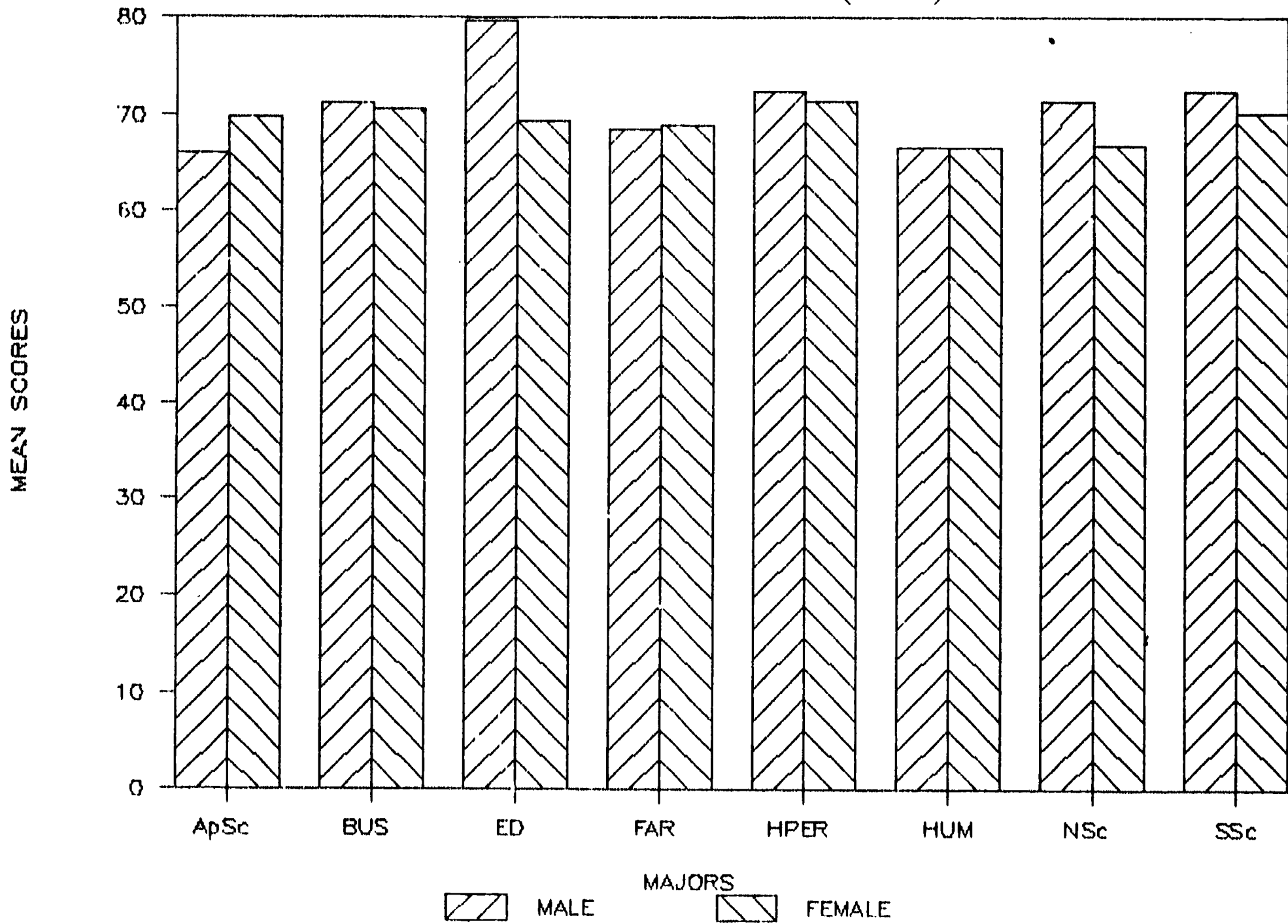
REALISM

AS RELATED TO ACADEMIC MAJOR (N=347)



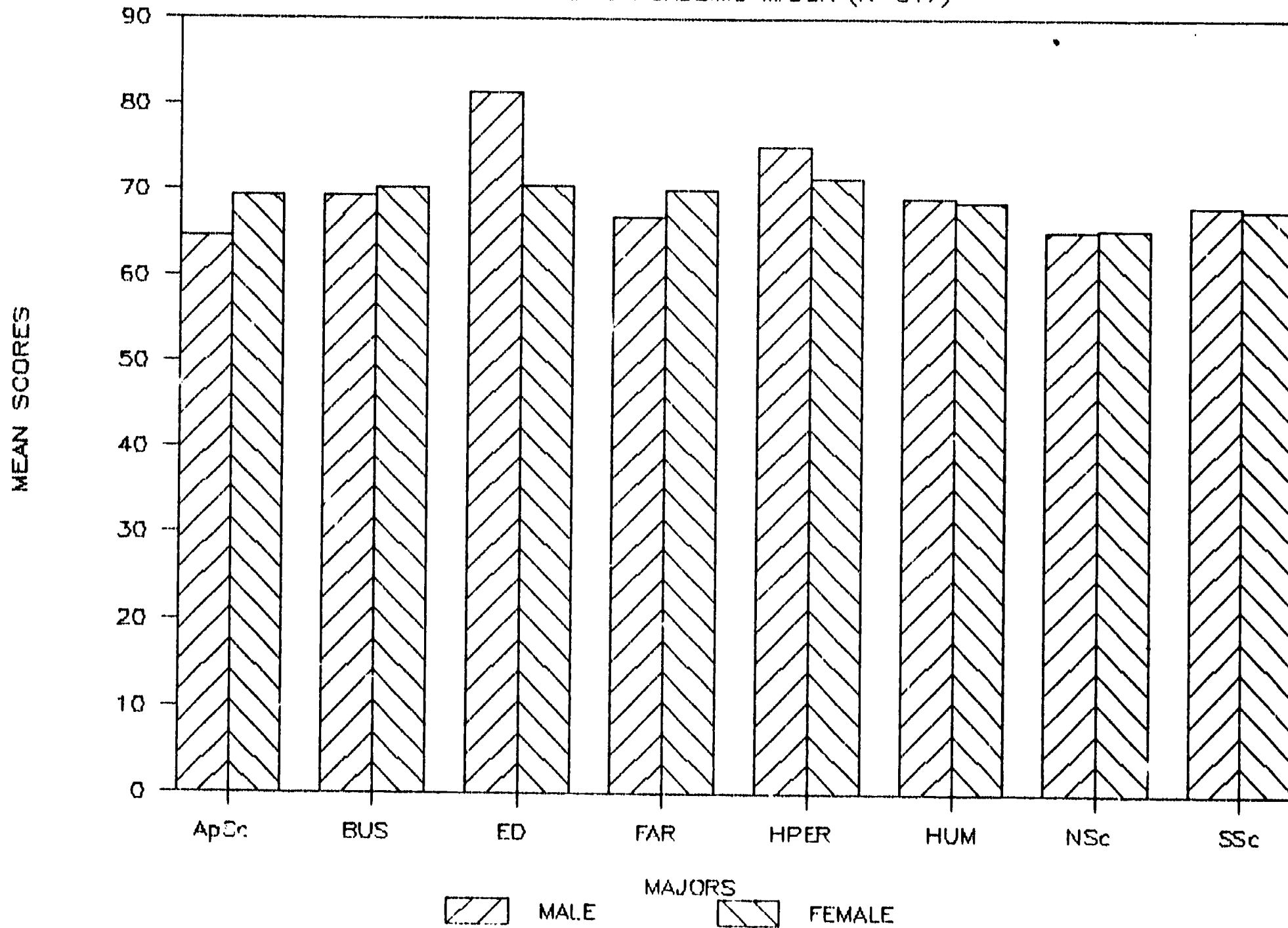
PRAGMATISM

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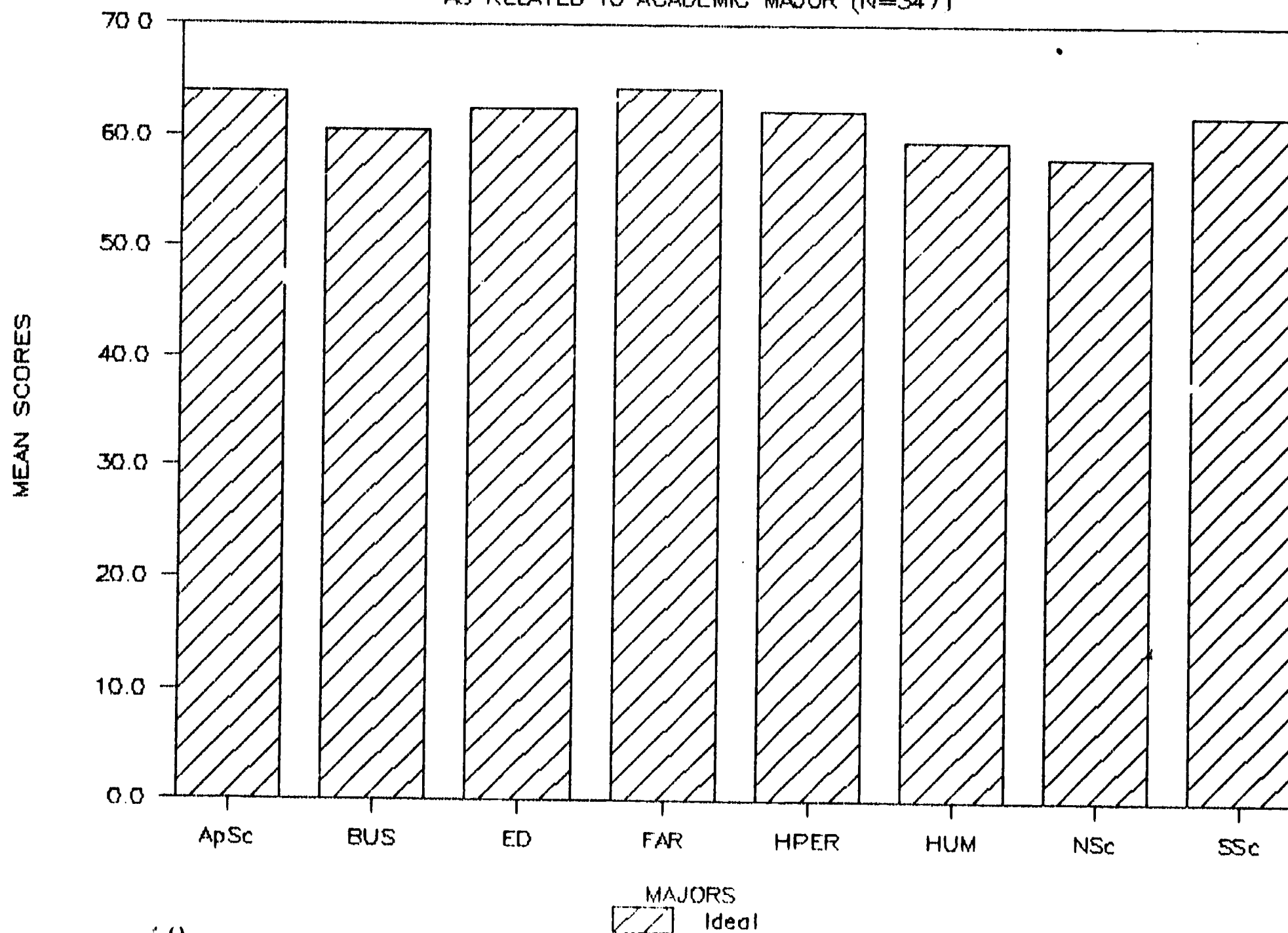
EXISTENTIALISM

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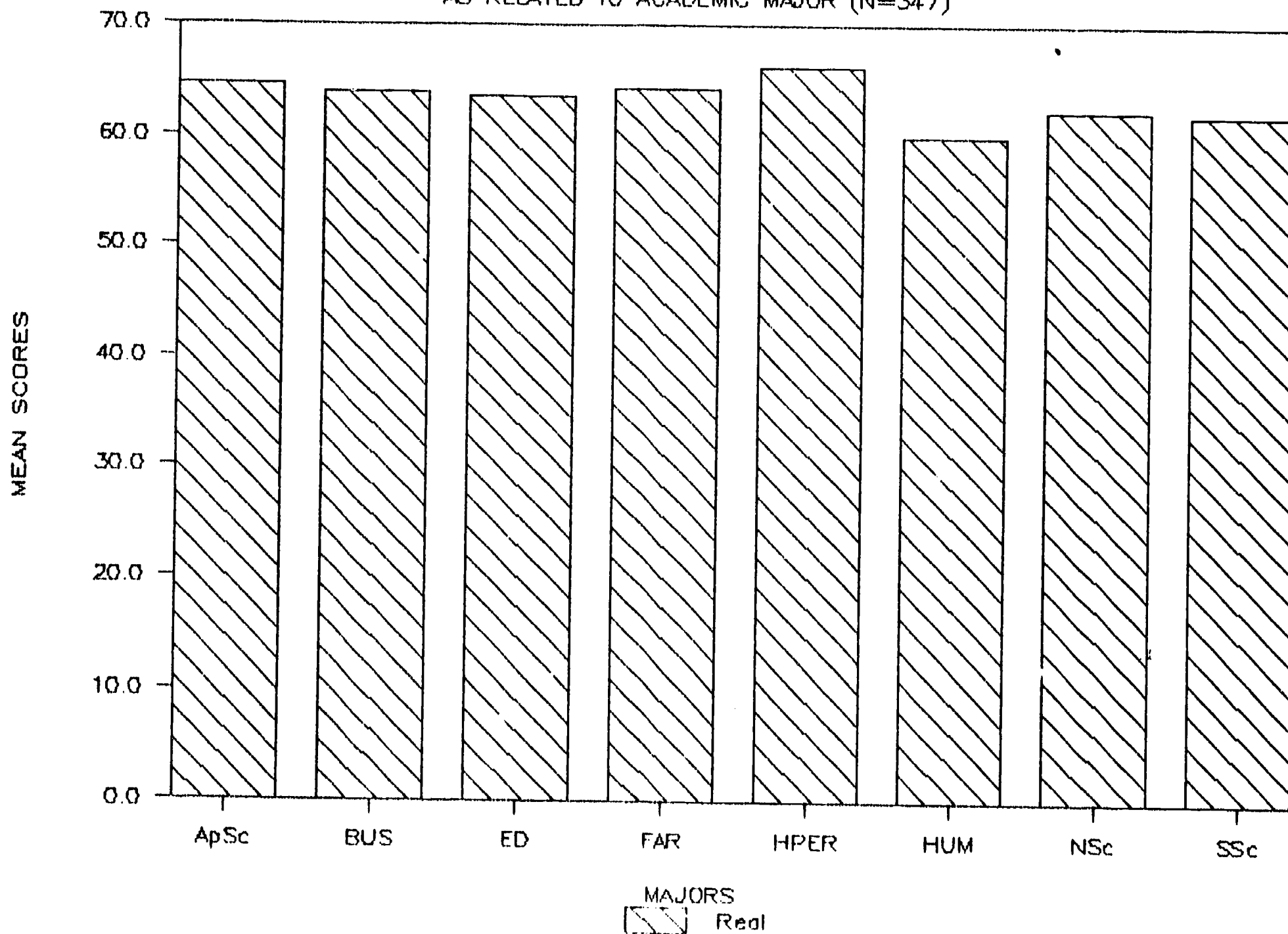
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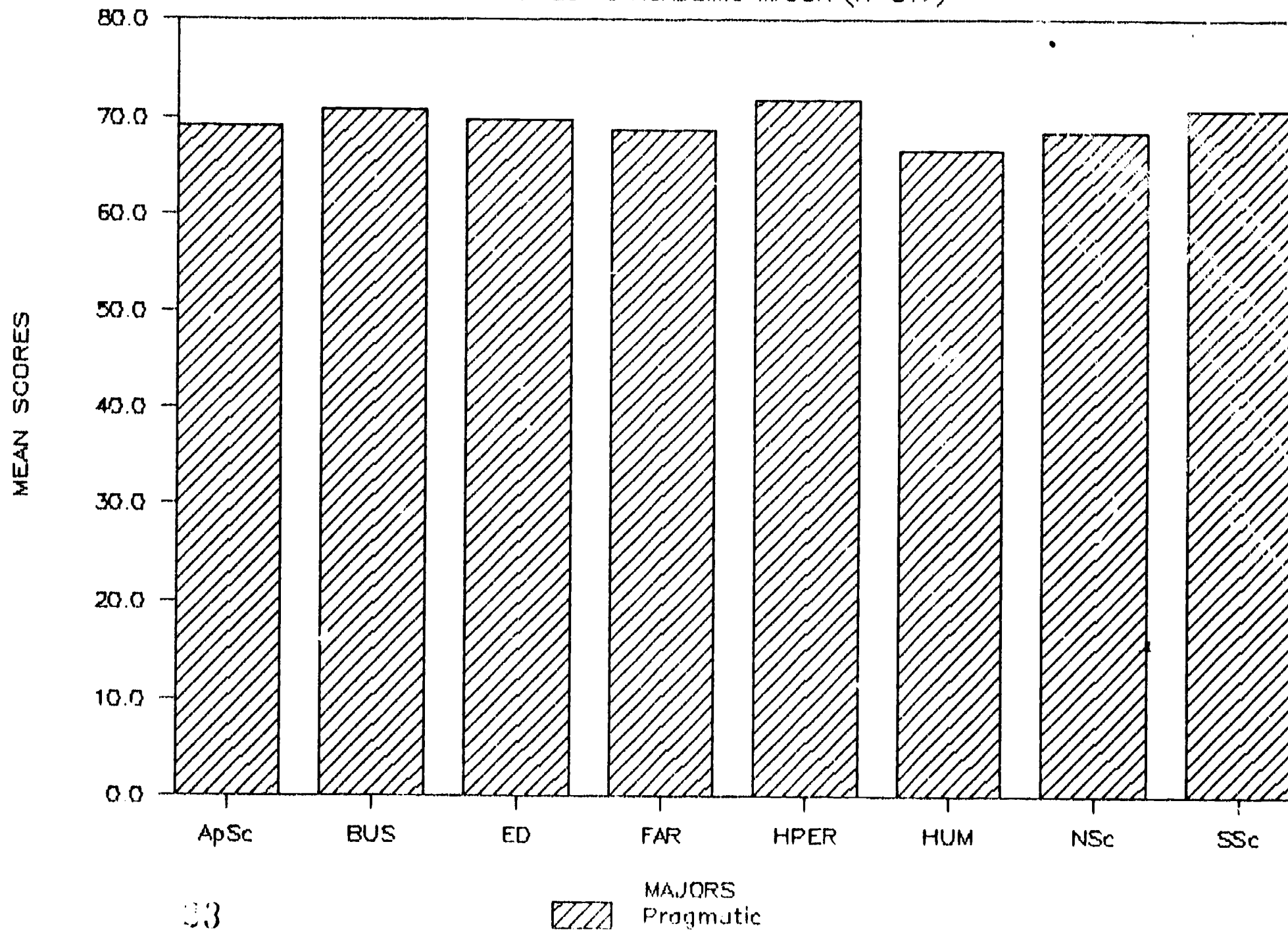
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